

Interagency Ecological Program (IEP) Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Version 1.3

Goals, Objectives and Overview

Goal: Develop a process by which IEP agencies and stakeholders will engage in transparent and understandable ways that will provide effective opportunities to improve understanding, collaboration and cooperation. A well defined strategy will have clear expectations of what is to be accomplished and the opportunities to participate will be well defined.

Stakeholders Defined: The persons and organizations that use IEP information to: (a) support natural resource planning, management, and regulatory activities in the estuary; and (b) understand and weigh in on those processes, decisions or actions. This includes water contractors, non-governmental organizations, non-IEP agencies and other interested parties.

Approach and Objectives: The IEP will recognize the needs, perspectives and capabilities of all stakeholders with an objective three-tiered approach. This is not a regulatory stakeholder process; rather it is focused on providing the highest quality science for wise decisions. This plan incorporates both important on-going efforts and provides the opportunity for supplementation with strategies consistent with the IEP Strategic Plan. The three parts are:

- *Engagement (Part I):* The IEP will provide effective opportunities for participation in the overall program. These will be accessible, timely, transparent and useful for scientists, policy makers and stakeholders.
- *Active Listening (Part II):* The IEP will ensure stakeholders are heard by documenting, summarizing and sharing input with scientists, policy makers and stakeholders.
- *Responsiveness (Part III):* The IEP will demonstrate understanding and consideration by: providing proper attribution of insights and published alternatives as part of publications and presentations; demonstrating where insights have been incorporated; recognizing where agreement and disagreement occurs; seeking partnerships on mutual objectives and adopting practices where the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders are considered in policy, planning and operations.

Schedule: This engagement plan will begin in 2013 with a goal of full implementation in 2014 with stakeholder input.

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Part I. Engagement

The IEP will provide effective opportunities for participation in the overall program. These will be accessible, timely, transparent and useful for scientists, policy makers and stakeholders.

Objective #1: To engage a broad range of stakeholders, the IEP will:

Convene an Interagency Ecological Program Stakeholder Group (IEPSG) of IEP Coordinators and stakeholders who use information and data developed by the IEP to manage and regulate the water quality and biological resources of the Bay-Delta or are interested in IEP Activities. The IEPSG will meet at least twice a year to provide updates on current IEP monitoring and research activities, to accept suggestions for future monitoring and research and to discuss issues of interest or concern. It will also be an opportunity to seek stakeholder input on methods and approaches to increase collaboration.

Metrics: (1) A minimum of two meetings per year will be conducted, open to the public and scheduled in sync with the work plan development schedule with all agendas and meeting materials distributed at least two weeks prior to each meeting. (2) IEPSG input will be documented and brought forward for consideration in IEP strategic planning, Management, Analysis, and Synthesis Team (MAST) synthesis, work plan development and in program review processes.

Objective #2: To engage collaborative science programs, the IEP will:

Invite representatives of other collaborative science programs to participate in a joint meeting with IEP Coordinators on a regular basis. This group will be responsible for ensuring coordinated communication, reviewing progress of each program's activities, providing input on strategic plans and business practice updates, pursuing joint efforts and coordinating between agencies.

Metrics: (1) Two meetings per year with the Coordinators will be conducted with other science programs. (2) This input will be documented and brought forward for consideration in IEP strategic planning, work plan development and in program reviews processes.

Objective #3: To engage scientists, the IEP will:

Encourage continued scientist participation and contribution to the IEP Project Work Teams (PWT). These teams, open to the public, are focused on specific research and monitoring topics of interest. Meeting schedules are left up to the PWTs. PWTs are formed to organize new studies, to review study plans and proposals, to write scientific papers and reports, and to promote collaboration among different groups working on the topics of interest.

Metrics: (1) PWT meeting times, locations and agendas will be posted on the IEP calendar and searchable by the world-wide-web. (2) PWTs will be invited to provide input/recommendations to MT for annual work plan development. (3) PWT recommendations will be documented for consideration in MAST synthesis and program review processes. (4) The IEP will facilitate at least one coordination meeting with PWT chairs and invite the chairs to Management Team (MT) meetings for focused discussions as appropriate.

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Encourage continued scientist participation and contribution in IEP solicitations for proposals to address key management questions as approved by the Directors and Coordinators. This process allows independent scientists to uniquely propose approaches to address key questions.

Metrics: (1) IEP solicitation notices will be shared via email lists as well as publicly noticed. (2) Participation and selection of accepted proposals will be tracked and shared.

Provide the opportunity for organized input and feedback by scientists for consideration for products prepared by the Management, Analysis and Synthesis Team (MAST). The MAST will objectively review, analyze, synthesize and integrate the latest science on focused areas taking into account information needs and science insights shared at PWTs and other prior stakeholder input opportunities.

Metrics: (1) IEP will provide an opportunity through PWTs, public forums and/or written comments to provide input on the range of topics under consideration for review and an opportunity to submit information on topics selected by the MAST. (2) MAST reviews will consider published results and valuable insights gained when preparing for reviews with proper attribution as appropriate. (3) An opportunity will be provided for comment on the final draft product.

Convene a Science Advisory Group (SAG) of non-agency experts as a standing panel to regularly review IEP elements and provide advice on scientific issues. These scientists will provide independent reviews that can consider all relevant science conducted on the review topic.

Metrics: (1) The SAG will have a broad range of scientists and be encouraged to consider a wide range of perspectives and paradigms. (2) Input opportunities and findings of SAG reviews will be published via the internet.

Objective #4: To share information and encourage dialog, the IEP will:

Conduct an annual IEP Workshop and participate in biannual Delta Science Conferences with requested attendance for agency staff and encouraged attendance for stakeholders and independent scientists. This provides a cost effective and timely opportunity for scientists to learn and ask questions directly from IEP agency staff and scientists conducting the latest research.

Metrics: (1) The IEP Workshop will be conducted once per year and be open to the public. (2) IEP workshop notices will be shared via email lists as well as publicly noticed. (3) All IEP agency scientists will be available at the conference to present talk and posters and/or participate in small group discussions as requested by the organizing committee. (3) The Workshop will provide a forum to improve stakeholder involvement;

Support independent science by providing timely information and tools through a partnership with the California Estuaries Monitoring Workgroup, working under the guidance of the California Water Quality Monitoring Council. This will enhance existing estuarine monitoring, assessment and reporting efforts to improve the delivery of water quality and ecosystem health information via the internet.

Metrics: (1) IEP agencies will actively participate on the Monitoring Council working groups. (2) IEP agencies will make information available for the portal. (3) IEP will provide technical support for the development of query tools and portal maintenance related to IEP and the San Francisco Estuary.

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Part II. Active Listening

The IEP will ensure stakeholders are heard by documenting, summarizing and sharing input with scientists, policy makers and stakeholders.

Objective # 1: The IEP will prepare and maintain a list of higher level questions that stakeholders have indicated would inform management decisions. These questions from scientists, policy makers and stakeholders in various forums will be summarized. This will be accompanied by a response document that will describe current efforts to address the questions, additional work needed to pursue the questions, applicable changes that are already under way and additional information that would be necessary to address the questions.

Metrics: (1) A list of questions that could inform management questions will be updated on an annual basis with input from stakeholders. (2) The list will be shared with the Management Team, Coordinators and Directors when considering new discretionary funding actions, during strategic plan updates and during development of questions for new solicitations and during information synthesis.

Part III. Responsiveness

The IEP will demonstrate understanding and consideration of stakeholder input by: providing proper attribution of insights and published alternatives as part of publications and presentations; demonstrating where insights have been incorporated; recognizing where agreement and disagreement occurs; seeking partnerships on mutual objectives and adopting practices where the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders are considered in policy, planning and operations.

Objective # 1: IEP processes and practices will demonstrate consideration of stakeholder input.

Metrics: (1) The MT will highlight how stakeholder input complements or contrasts proposals and recommendations during briefings to Coordinators for more thorough considerations. (2) The MAST will highlight how stakeholder input complements or contrasts synthesis findings and note important contributions during briefings. (3) Potential partnerships to address findings will be identified in proposals for discretionary studies. (4) The Coordinators will be periodically updated on stakeholder input and provided an opportunity to review how that input complements or contrasts results during the previous year. (5) The Coordinators and Directors will consider stakeholder input during Strategic Plan updates and updates to science strategies.